

“Bible Doctrine”: Wayne Grudem
6. The Character of God: The Trinity
Notes: Pastor Keith McMinn

I. Explanation and Scriptural Basis

God exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit yet He is One God.

Trinity Defined: “God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and each person is fully God, and there is one God. (Grudem, p. 117)

A. The Doctrine of the Trinity is Progressively Revealed in Scripture

1. Partial Revelation in the Old Testament

- The word Trinity is not found in the Bible.
- Means “triunity” or “three-in-oneness.
- Summarizes the teaching of Scripture that God is three persons yet one God.

- *Then God said, “Let us make man[a] in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. (Genesis 1:26)*

- *Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever— (Genesis 3:22)*

- *Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech. (Genesis 11:7)*

2. More Complete Revelation of the Trinity in the New Testament

- “When the New Testament opens, we enter into the history of the coming of the Son of God to earth.” (Grudem, p. 119)

- *And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:16-17)*

- *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (2 Corinthians 13:14)*

- *But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. (Jude 20-21)*

B. Three Statements Summarize the Biblical Teaching

- “In one sense, the doctrine of the Trinity is a mystery that we will never be able to fully understand. However, we can understand something of its truth by summarizing the teaching of Scripture in three statements (Grudem, p.120):

1. God is three persons
2. Each person is fully God.
3. There is one God

1. God is three persons

- *But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. (John 14:26)*
- *My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. (I John 2:1)*
- *Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. (John 16:7)*
- Personal Activities- John 14:26
- Bearing witness- John 15:26
- Interceding or praying on behalf of others- Romans 8:26-27
- Searching the depths of God- 1 Corinthians 2:10
- “Finally if the Holy Spirit is understood simply to be the power of God, rather than a distinct person, then a number of passages would simply not make sense, because in them the Holy Spirit and His power or the power of God are both mentioned.” (Grudem, 121)

2. Each Person is fully God

- The testimony of Scripture is that each person is fully God.

1. God the Father is clearly God

2. The Son is fully God- *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. (John 1:1-4)*

- *He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, (Hebrews 1:3)*

- *For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, (Colossians 2:9)*

3. The Holy Spirit is also fully God- *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (Matthew 28:19)*

3. There is one God

- As Grudem says this is only one God.
- *“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. (Deuteronomy 6:4)*
- *“God alone is the one true God, and there is no one like him. When He speaks, He alone is speaking– He is not speaking as one God among three who are to be worshiped.” (Grudem, p. 124)*
- *I am the Lord, and there is no other; besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other. (Isaiah 45:5-6)*
- *For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, (I Timothy 2:5)*

4. All analogies have shortcomings

- Three leaf clover, water, man

“It is best to conclude that no analogy adequately teaches about the Trinity , and all are misleading in significant ways. (Grudem, p. 125)

5. Simplistic solutions must all deny one strand of Biblical teaching

1. God is three persons
2. Each person is fully God.
3. There is one God

C. Errors Have Come by Denying Any of the Three Statements Summarizing the Biblical Teaching

- 1. Modalism claims that there is one person who appears to us in three different forms (or “models”)-** “People think that God is not distinct person but only a person who appears to people in different modes and at different time. (Grudem, p. 17)
- 2. Arianism denies the full deity of the Son and the Holy Spirit-** *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. (Colossians 1:15)*

We believe in one God, the Father, Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible. (Nicene Creed)

- 3. Tritheism denies that there is only one God-** This view holds that there are three Gods.
- 4. The importance of the doctrine of the trinity**
 - Implications for the very heart of the Christians faith
 - The atonement is at stake
 - Justification by Faith alone is threatened if we deny the full deity of the Son
 - If Jesus is not an infinite God, should we pray to him or worship him?

Chapter Review Questions

1. Define the doctrine of the trinity?

- Trinity Defined: “God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and each person is fully God, and there is one God. (Grudem, p. 117)

2. True or **False**: The word trinity is found in the Bible in a few places.

3. What are three statements that summarize the biblical teachings on the Trinity?

1. God is three persons
2. Each person is fully God.
3. There is one God

4. Explain a piece of evidence that points to the full divinity of each of the persons of the Trinity?

5. Beside each hersey, put the number corresponding to the statement about the Trinity it denies.

(See study guide)

6. Why is the doctrine of the Trinity so important?

- The atonement is at stake
- Justification by Faith alone is threatened if we deny the full deity of the Son
- If Jesus is not an infinite God, should we pray to him or worship him?

D. What are the Distinctions between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?

1. The persons of the Trinity have different primary functions in relating to the world
2. The meaning of monogenes: is Jesus God’s “only begotten” Son?
3. The meaning of the eternal generation of the Son
4. The persons of the Trinity eternally existed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
5. Does the Son eternally submit to the authority of the Father?
 - a) The Father always acts as a leader
 - b) This pattern is never reversed
 - c) A serious misrepresentation of this teaching
 - d) What is the relationship between the three persons and the being of God?
 - e) Can we understand the doctrine of the Trinity?

E. Application

F. Additional Note: Christianity and Mormonism

1. The Mormon church is not the “restored church”
2. The Book of Mormon is man-made
3. The Bible is God’s Word and it is trustworthy
4. The one true God is an eternal spiritual being
5. The Trinity involves three persons in one God
6. Humans are creatures and never become gods
7. Jesus is God, not the spirit-brother of Lucifer
8. Salvation is by grace through faith, not by works
9. The afterlife involves heaven and hell, not three degrees of glory
10. Jesus changed my life forever

Chapter Review Questions

7. Draw a line between the person of the Trinity and their role(s) in creation and redemption: (See study guide)
8. Give a brief definition of the eternal generation of the Son in your own words.
9. True/False: The person of the Trinity could easily switch roles in redemption.
10. Fill in the blanks: The pattern of Father-Son interaction in Scripture is one-directional, _____ the Father and _____ the Son.
11. Is it possible to understand the doctrine of the Trinity? Explain.
12. Having read the biblical evidence on the Trinity from the Old and New Testaments, which passage or passages are most convincing or compelling to you?